

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
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TAGS: ELAB, PINT, TU
SUBJ: TRADE UNION REACTIONS TO CALL FOR WAGE RESTRAINTS

REF: ANKARA 3620 (DTG 101502Z MAY 78)

1. PRIMIN ECEVIT'S CALL FOR WAGE RESTRAINTS AND MORE
DISCIPLINED BEHAVIOR BY TRADE UNIONS IN THEIR COLLECTIVE
BARGAINING DEMANDS (REFTEL) EVOKED PROMPT RESPONSES FROM
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THE TRADE UNION CONFEDERATIONS.

A. HALIL TUNC, PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERATION OF TURKISH
TRADE UNIONS (TURK-IS), TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE MAY 11
THAT HIS ORGANIZATIONS FEARED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD FALLEN
UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE VIEWS AND PROPAGANDA COMING
FROM EMPLOYER QUARTERS. WHEREAS TURK-IS HAD REGARDED

IT AS A PATRIOTIC DUTY TO SUPPORT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT FROM ITS VERY FIRST DAY, TUNC SAID, HIS CONFEDERATION COULD NOT ABANDON ITS OBLIGATION TO MAINTAIN LABOR RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS. DEMANDS FOR 100 PERCENT WAGE INCREASES AT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING HELD EVERY TWO OR THREE YEARS SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED STRANGE WHEN PRICES HAVE SOARED AND THE COST OF LIVING HAS RISEN BY OVER 50 PERCENT PER YEAR. LABOR IS PREPARED TO WORK WITH THE GOVERNMENT TO CONTROL PRICES, SLOW INFLATION, CURB ANARCHY AND SOLVE THE NATION'S OTHER SERIOUS PROBLEMS.

B. IN A STILL STRONGER STATEMENT, ABDULLAH BASTRUK, PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERATION OF TURKISH REVOLUTIONARY/ REFORMIST TRADE UNIONS (DISK) CATEGORICALLY OPPOSED ANY ATTEMPT BY THE GOVERNMENT TO FREEZE WAGES OR TAKE ANY SIMILAR STEPS. ECEVIT'S WORDS AIMING AT CURTAILING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, HE SAID, WOULD OPEN THE WAY TO CONTROLLED TRADE UNIONISM, TO WHICH DISK WAS TOTALLY OPPOSED. THE SHORTCOMINGS COMMENTED ON BY THE PRIMIN WERE AN OUTCOME OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM. THE REAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM, BASTURK MAINTAINED, LAY IN PUTTING AN END TO EXPLOITATION, NOT INTERFERING IN THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING SYSTEM. HE DENOUNCED THE IMPRESSION WHICH WAS GIVEN BY ECEVIT'S WORDS THAT TRADE UNION RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THE LABORING CLASS AS A GIFT.
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2. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION MAY 16, TUNC SAID HE HAD BEEN SURPRISED BY ECEVIT'S STATEMENT SINCE HE HAD BEEN DISCUSSING WITH THE PRIMIN ON THE PREVIOUS DAY WAYS TO PROMOTE TURK-IS COOPERATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT. THE TIMING OF THE PUBLIC CALL FOR WAGE RESTRAINTS WAS ESPECIALLY UNFORTUNATE, TUNC SAID. MANY PUBLIC SECTOR CONTRACTS ARE COMING UP FOR NEGOTIATION IN 1978, INVOLVING 570,000 WORKERS, AND THE PRIMIN'S REMARKS HAVE SPREAD ALARM THROUGH THE UNIONS CONCERNED. NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE MUCH MORE DIFFICULT IN THIS ATMOSPHERE.

3. PRESS COMMENTS HAVE GENERALLY SUPPORTED ECEVIT'S POSITION THAT WAGE DEMANDS ARE EXCESSIVE, BUT THEY HAVE POINTED OUT THAT A VICIOUS CIRCLE HAS STARTED TO OPERATE BETWEEN RISING PRICES AND INCREASED WAGE DEMANDS. INFLATION TAKES AWAY WHAT IS GIVEN THE WORKERS BEFORE IT EVEN ENTERS THEIR POCKETS. SACRIFICES MUST NOT BE ONE-SIDED BUT ARE NEEDED FROM BOTH LABOR AND EMPLOYERS, EDITORIALISTS HAVE OBSERVED. SPIERS

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